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IMAGINATION
AND
DRAMATIC INSTINCT.

SOME PRACTICAL STEPS FOR THEIR
DEVELOPMENT.

By S. S. ^{Amel}CURRY, PH.D.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is a study of vocal expression, as the direct revelation of the processes of the mind in thinking and feeling; and as the manifestation of the elliptic relations of thought which words cannot symbolize, such as the convictions, the beliefs, the interest, and the purpose of the speaker. According to this view, vocal expression is a significant, not a symbolic language, and is more subjective, complex, and nearer to Nature than words, and hence cannot be developed in the same way as a symbolic or representative language, nor be made subject to the same mechanical rules.

The work is meant to furnish simple and practical suggestions. In nearly every case a poem or selection is placed before the mind of the student, and the remarks made are intended to aid in the study of the extract, and especially in its interpretation by the living voice. "To know a thing, we must do it" is a fundamental principle of education. The mind must be brought directly into contact with nature. Experiment is the true method of scientific study, but the principle applies even more to literary or artistic work. The student must be set to doing,— explanation must be subordinate, and only for guidance in the discovery or study of the principles for himself in practice. This book is an endeavor to furnish a practical means of studying and training the Imagination and Dramatic Instinct. It aims to bring the mind of the student into direct contact with the noble works of Literature, not

merely to analyze or to understand the thought in such works, but to stimulate and awaken the faculties in the reader which are awake in the writer, to study the processes of the mind in creating and assimilating ideas for the true artistic interpretation of literature by the living voice. It furnishes a practical means of educating some important actions of the mind by the oldest of all artistic agents, the voice.

In certain cases problems are definitely stated, but more frequently there are suggestions which can be formulated by the teacher, or by the student himself. All great artists sketch and make studies of the objects of nature. This is the true method of art study; there is no substitute for it. Hence, the same method must be used by the student of literature, or of vocal expression. There must be long-continued study in the rendering of single lines or phrases. Such studies must be arranged for students according to their needs, and the student himself must direct his efforts to those points in which he is weakest.

In using the book in class, my custom is to assign certain selections a week beforehand and have students study and read them alone; then afterward with the teacher for suggestions and criticisms. The studies are to be read over to aid the student in comprehending criticisms and difficulties in the rendering of a poem, or to stimulate deeper studies or broader investigations. The student's understanding and assimilation of the principles involved are chiefly to be judged by his rendering of a passage, or by his method of speaking. Occasionally, questions should be asked to test the student's conception of the deeper meanings of a passage of literature or the apprehension of its vocal interpretation or by his understanding of the steps which are being taken. My own aim is usually to keep many things before the student's mind, such as the essential nature of all ex-

pression, of all artistic endeavor, the steps he is taking in vocal expression, the spirit of the literary work he is studying, or the speech he is trying to make, and also his own special needs or tendencies; first one and then another of these is emphasized to stimulate his harmonious growth.

This work is intended to follow "Lessons in Vocal Expression." That volume takes up the simpler processes of thinking, the more elemental or logical relations of ideas, while this takes up the imaginative and sympathetic elements, the ideal and dramatic relations of ideas to feeling and experience.

Practice in vocal expression should always be connected with vocal training. At every stage of his progress the teacher should give the student definite steps for the training of his voice, using the same or different extracts. The student must realize the character of his tone, and the effect of his mind upon it. Do the qualities of his voice change with his ideas and feelings? Does he feel his ideas, his imaginative conceptions of relations and background, his deeper feelings in the tones and modulations of his voice?

The book has grown from practical struggles in teaching for twenty years, from a realization of the importance of awakening the Imagination and Dramatic Instinct of college, theological, or law students, and in fact of every man and woman of whatever aim in life. The volume is larger than it would otherwise have been on account of the neglect or misconceptions of many aspects of the subject at the present time. Many of the lessons may be easily extended or related to wider courses, the History of Humor, Forms of Poetry, History of Lyric Poetry, and many other subjects. In fact, the volume is intended as a companion to the student in the study of literature to throw light upon practical vocal interpretation as one of the chief means to get at the spirit of literary work.

PREFACE.

No one realizes its inadequacy, its imperfections, more than the writer. It has been prepared in the midst of the continual and engrossing duties of practical teaching. It is hoped that, while it has the imperfections of the teacher, it will also have the spirit of practical teaching, and prove suggestive and helpful to a large number of students, and meet a great variety of needs.

S. S. C.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS,
September, 1896.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHAT is the imagination? Is it of any use? Can it be trained? Is it not a merely ornamental appendage to human nature, impractical and untruthful? Unfortunately, such questions are common, and indicate widespread misconception of the faculty.

The relation of education to imagination has hitherto received slight attention at the hands of educators in general. The development of the imagination has been given little or no place in the courses of study in our schools, nor has it been regarded as worthy of any distinctive attention in college training. "In the curriculums of most of our higher institutions of learning in America and England," says Professor Charles Eliot Norton, "no place is given to that instruction which has for its end the cultivation of the imagination and the sentiments, through the refining of the perceptions and the quickening of the love of beauty." Education, say some of our legislators, must give a man the means of making a living; our public schools must train up practical citizens; boys and girls must be educated in the practical arts of life; the ornamental has no place in the school-room.

Such views of education utterly fail to grasp the nature of the imagination and its relation to daily life. They overlook the need of securing the right action of all the faculties, and do not perceive that the harmonious development of the whole man is necessary to the adequate performance of the simplest and most practical business of life. Work without imagination is drudgery, but with it the humblest employment is lifted into the realm of beauty and art. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well. The imagination is the source of all inspiration and interest in life; its activity creates beauty in the commonest objects of handicraft, and gives charm to the humblest home.

But why should the imagination be trained? Because its perversion or abnormal action is one of the leading causes of the degradation of character, while its right use is one of the highest characteristics of the normal human being. It should be developed because it is the chief creative faculty. It is this which gives man taste and refinement; which raises him out of a narrow prison into communion with the universe; which lifts him from a groove into relation with all things and all men; which develops the comprehension of universal principles; which prevents man from regarding Nature as a mere mechanical product, and enables him to feel it as a process, and consciously to follow that process in his own art.

Imagination should be developed because all true appreciation of art and literature is dependent upon its exercise. Man can appreciate art only by the same faculty which creates it. That which is awake in the artist in the act of production must be awakened in the beholder, or there can be no genuine realization. In short, imagination not only creates all art, but it appreciates art. Without its presence there can be no genuine love of art; without it, the language of art is unintelligible, its voice unheard, its spirit unfelt.

Imagination makes the individual a citizen of the world, an heir to all the ages; it enables him to appreciate not only the art of his own age and his own country, but that of all other lands and times. By its power he can become a Greek, and see as the Greeks saw, and feel as the Greeks felt.

Imagination lies at the foundation of all altruistic instinct, whether of art or ethics. Unless it is developed, there can be little improvement in the ideals of a man or a nation. No man has ever become great without an ideal, and the faculty which gives birth to ideals is imagination. This is the prophetic faculty of the soul, which gives hope, and which enables us to see a new and better world in the midst of the old, a new life in the midst of death, a new character in the midst of degradation. No man can ever rise higher than his ideal; but without an ideal, no man can ever rise at all. No age, no nation, no individual, can ever be elevated except by elevating its ideals.

Imagination is the faculty which enables us to enter into sympathy with our fellow-men. By its power alone can we appreciate the point of view of those different from ourselves. Without imagination, each of us would be alone; each of us would be cold and selfish.

Imagination gives us the power to penetrate to the heart of Nature; it is the faculty which sees beauty and loveliness; which discovers grace in the motion of the storm; "that leans her ear in many a secret place," until "beauty born of murmuring sound shall pass into her face."

Imagination is the faculty which enables man to realize eternity. The ordinary conceptions of the mind cannot embrace infinity, or God. Imagination alone enables man to transcend the fetters of time and space, to see the eternal through the temporal, the spiritual beneath the physical, the soul underlying all. It is imagination which penetrates through all seeming, through the wild whirlwind and storm which are part of every life and every human soul, to "the central peace existing at the heart of endless agitation."

The imagination should be trained because the whole man should be trained, because it is the fountain-head of all noble feeling, and upon its discipline depends any true education of the emotions.

Dramatic instinct has received even less recognition than imagination. All men more or less admire imagination, though they may not think of it as an object of education; but few persons regard dramatic power as a characteristic of a strong and noble human being. It is frequently considered an unnatural, if not an abnormal power. Nor do many consider it capable of education, but due to some accident of temperament peculiar to a few; while even those who regard its education as possible, look upon its development as on the same plane as the practice of sleight-of-hand.

There are some exceptions, however, to this superficial view. A prominent judge, at a dinner of the alumni of his college, is reported to have said that if he were a rich man he would endow

a chair in all the colleges for the development of the dramatic instinct. Upon this instinct, he held, success in every walk of life depends. The teacher cannot teach unless he sees as the student sees; the preacher cannot preach without the power of putting himself in another man's place; the merchant succeeds on account of the ability to read the wishes and needs of his customers. And so it is throughout all human experience and endeavor: an instinctive knowledge of human nature is the basis of success. All men are great in proportion to their ability to get outside of themselves.

A proper conception of dramatic instinct must be gained apart from the stage. Many of the exhibitions upon the stage are devoid of anything essentially dramatic. If the stage were a place for the pure and noble representation of dramatic instinct, there would be few who would have any objection to it. The men with the strongest dramatic instinct whom it has been my privilege to meet or hear have not been actors, — such men as Beecher and Gough.

Dramatic instinct should be trained because it is a part of the imagination, because it gives us practical steps towards the development of the imagination, because it is the means of securing discipline and power over feeling. Dramatic instinct should be trained because it is the insight of one mind into another. The man who has killed his dramatic instinct has become unsympathetic, and can never appreciate any one's point of view but his own. Dramatic instinct endows us with broad conceptions of the idiosyncrasies, beliefs, and convictions of men. It trains us to unconscious reasoning, to a deep insight into the motives of man. It is universally felt that one's power to "other himself" is the measure of the greatness of his personality. All sympathy, all union of ourselves with the ideals and struggles of our race, are traceable to imagination and dramatic instinct.

The relation of imagination to dramatic instinct has not been sufficiently appreciated. Many years ago the editor of the "North American Review" published a symposium from various actors upon the nature of dramatic instinct. It is curious to note that nearly all these said that dramatic instinct had two elements, —

imagination and sympathy. Imagination affords insight into character; sympathy enables us to identify ourselves with it. Thus, imagination and dramatic instinct are essentially united. The little child who is imaginative always shows it by dramatic actions in his play.

While imagination and dramatic instinct may be separated in conception, while the difference in their actions may be distinguished, practically they are always united, especially in their higher actions. Together they form the chief elements of altruism. They redeem the mind from narrowness and selfishness; they enable the individual to appreciate the point of view, the feelings, motives, and characters of his fellow-men; they open his eyes to read the various languages of human art; they enable him to commune with his kind on a higher plane than that of commonplace facts; they lift him into communion with the art and spirit of every age and nation. Without their development man is excluded from the highest enjoyment, the highest communion with his kind, and from the highest success in every walk of life.

One of the chief needs of the education of our time is a practical method for the development of the imagination and the dramatic instinct, — a method which will prevent their abuse, bring the mind into direct contact with the greatest products of the imagination, and train students to appreciate the highest literature and art. There are many methods of studying and training these powers, but the one here to be indicated has proved successful through many years of experience, and is essentially the same as that adopted in the schools of the Greeks, whose development of the artistic nature is universally considered to have been the highest ever known.

The best method of developing the imagination is by the study of Nature and poetic expression. A sympathetic love of the beautiful in Nature is characteristic of noble imagination. Even in the study of art there must ever be a comparison with Nature. George F. Watts once said, "People must be trained to a higher appreciation of art by being led to see what a great artist Nature is."

The influence of Nature in the education of the human mind cannot be over-estimated. Wordsworth has taught us to realize the power of Nature to stimulate and unfold the energies of the soul. All art proceeds from wonder. A sympathetic observation of life has been instrumental in every age in stimulating the mental and artistic faculties.

Nature alone, however, is inadequate to secure the full power of imagination. Thousands have grown up in the midst of the greatest beauty of Nature with low and sensuous ideals, and without having their sense of beauty awakened. Art is therefore needed to show us Nature's subtleties, to give us a right attitude of mind towards her, and to awaken sympathetic attention to her revelations.

What form of art should be studied? Every form as far as possible; for each art is a distinct language, which expresses some aspect of the human soul and realizes some truth apprehended in no other way. Music and poetry are "arts in time," and can reveal the sequence of ideas and the movement of life; but painting works in space, and is confined to the intense realization of one moment. It is intensive, where other arts are extensive. Both are needed for adequate expression.

Any one of these arts — even poetry, the highest of all, and the most capable of being used as a means of developing the imagination — may, when studied alone, cause the student to become one-sided. The painter who never studies anything but his own art becomes superficial. The poet who fails to see the depth and force in plastic and pictorial art becomes merely literary. Painters condemn a picture which is too "literary," — this use of the word indicating those who merely write, who merely look at Nature as a means of literary description. On the other hand, the painter who never studies books or other arts almost ceases to think; some have even gone so far as to say "the painter has no business to think at all."

Every great art is a special language of the human spirit, and he who desires to awaken his artistic nature will learn to read all these languages. The possession of merely literary and artistic knowledge does not imply culture; for this results from the

harmonious activity of all the faculties of the mind. It is dependent upon appreciation, upon insight into art and poetry, upon sympathy with the ideals of humanity.

Too much cannot be said in favor of the erection of beautiful public buildings, and of museums of art. It is to be hoped that the time is not far distant when every village will have its art collections, when every school-room and every home will be filled with objects of art.

Art which has to do with imagination is called poetry; and while poetry belongs to painting, sculpture, music, and architecture, its chief expression is in certain forms of literary composition. A love of poetic literature has nearly always preceded a desire for other forms of art. It is always associated with a love of the beautiful in Nature; its greatest masterpieces can become the possession of all, and hence it must serve as the chief means of educating the imagination.

Again, poetry is fullest of imaginative life and energy. In every poem there are possibilities of innumerable paintings, if only the artistic nature can intensely realize each successive picture. Its materials are the simple words of common minds; its form or body is simply an orderly or rhythmic arrangement of human speech.

Taking for granted, then, that literature will best educate the imagination, the question arises, What methods of studying it are best adapted to exercise this faculty?

Until comparatively recent times, the highest culture was supposed to be embodied in the Greek and Latin languages. The study of these constituted for centuries the chief means of literary training. But the great discoveries in every field of scientific investigation, during the present century, have led many to doubt the power of Greek and Latin to furnish the broadest possible education. With this tendency to doubt the advantage of studying these languages, there has grown up also a neglect of all literary culture. At the present time, a majority of the studies in all grades of schools concern themselves chiefly with the acquisition of knowledge.

The too exclusive study of science, however, is in turn slowly leading to the realization of the inadequacy of facts to develop the whole man harmoniously and completely. Slowly but surely our leading educators are coming to feel that science alone is insufficient for the complete development of the whole man. A great scientist of our age, Charles Darwin, has said: "I used to sit for hours reading the historical plays of Shakespeare, generally in an old window in the thick walls of the school. I read also other poetry, such as Thomson's 'Seasons,' and the recently published poems of Byron and Scott. I mention this, because later in life I wholly lost, to my great regret, all pleasure from poetry of any kind, including Shakespeare."

In another part of the biography from which this extract is taken, he adds: "Up to the age of thirty, or beyond it, poetry of many kinds — such as the works of Milton, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley — gave me great pleasure; and even as a schoolboy I took intense delight in Shakespeare, especially in the historical plays. I have also said that formerly pictures gave me considerable, and music very great, delight. But now for many years I cannot endure to read a line of poetry: I have tried lately to read Shakespeare, and found it so intolerably dull that it nauseated me. I have also almost lost my taste for pictures or music. Music generally sets me thinking too energetically on what I have been at work upon, instead of giving me pleasure. . . . My mind seems to have become a machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts; but why this should have caused the atrophy of that part of the brain alone on which the higher tastes depend, I cannot conceive. . . . If I had to live my life again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use. The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably to the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature."¹

¹ Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, i. 30, 81.

So innumerable have modern discoveries been, that it is almost impossible for any human being to acquire a mastery of all the facts in every department of human knowledge. Hence, there is a renewed disposition among some educators to defend the true principle of education; namely, mental discipline, rather than dependence upon the acquisition of unrelated facts.

This disposition, however, has not been shown in a renewal of interest in the study of Greek and Latin, but in the study of one's own language and literature. This is the most hopeful sign in modern education. It is a man's native literature which lies nearest his heart. It is upon this that the creative energy of the imagination must be exercised. "The highest mark of culture in any man is shown by his ability to speak and write his own language with accuracy, ease, and elegance."

In turning to the study of our own language, however, the true method of using it for the stimulation of the artistic nature has hardly been reached. Two influences have made the first method in the study of literature largely a study of philology. In the first place, the reverence given to Latin and Greek has led us to trace the origin of our words. In the second place, the scientific spirit of the age has affected even the study of literature; so that the courses of studies in literature in our different colleges have been chiefly studies in philology.

The study of literature, however, could not long remain thus limited. Such courses were presently felt to be a study, not of literature, but of words; and while etymology and philology are very important, they are simply aspects of scientific study, and have little to do with the development of the artistic nature. Everything may be studied both scientifically and artistically. The difference in training is not in the subject, but in the method of procedure and the faculties which are called into exercise.

The next step was the study of the facts of literature. This is at present regarded as a great advance in the study of literature. That it is a gain, no one will deny; but the method is still scientific. The facts about a poem — the aim, the subject, and the language used — are all analyzed and discussed. I have known many students to say that they never desired to recite or study or



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